United Nations A/70/76–E/2015/57

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 April 2015

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventieth session
Item 74 (b) of the preliminary list*
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: assistance to the Palestinian people

Economic and Social Council
2015 session
21 July 2014-22 July 2015
Agenda item 14
Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations

Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 69/242, contains an assessment of the assistance received by the Palestinian people, needs still unmet and proposals for responding to them. It provides a description of efforts made by the United Nations, in cooperation with the Government, donors and civil society, to support the Palestinian population and institutions.

During the reporting period (May 2014-March 2015), the situation on the ground deteriorated following the breakdown of peace negotiations. The United Nations continued its efforts to respond to humanitarian and development challenges in the context of occupation, but placed particular focus on providing humanitarian assistance during and after the conflict between Gaza and Israel and support to the Palestinian Government of national consensus. The Organization, while maintaining that full lifting of the closures of Gaza was required, brokered a temporary agreement between the Governments of Israel and the State of Palestine to enable the entry, use and monitoring of "dual-use" material into Gaza to allow reconstruction work and the rehabilitation of damaged facilities at scale.

* A/70/50.

15-05201 (E) 220415

Please recycle

The 2015 Strategic Response Plan, requiring $705 million, outlines the programming to meet urgent humanitarian needs throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. To complement that programming and respond to the governance, recovery, reconstruction and structural development needs that have been compounded by the conflict, the United Nations Support Plan for the Transformation of the Gaza Strip 2014-2016 details the contribution of the United Nations to the National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza for 2014-2017 and requests $2.1 billion. In addition, at the request of the Government, the United Nations, together with the European Union and the World Bank, carried out a detailed needs assessment to further inform the recovery and reconstruction work in Gaza.

The Government continued to implement the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty. In support of those efforts, the United Nations continued to implement the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2014-2016. The financial resources required for the assistance provided through the Framework are some $1.2 billion.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 69/242, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventieth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution, containing an assessment of the assistance actually received by the Palestinian people and an assessment of the needs still unmet and specific proposals for responding effectively to them. Also included is a summary of key political developments and challenges relevant to the reporting period, as the international community continued to work to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people, especially during and after the escalation of hostilities in Gaza, and to support the State-building efforts of the Government of the State of Palestine and to promote negotiations between the parties. The reporting period is from May 2014 to March 2015.

2. Information on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people is provided in several reports prepared by other United Nations agencies, in particular: the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (to be issued); the annual report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/69/13); and the report of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in September 2014.

3. The humanitarian, economic and development needs of the Palestinian people are reflected in several complementary strategic and resource mobilization documents. The 2015 Strategic Response Plan seeks $705 million to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs by enhancing the protective environment and tackling the food insecurity of the most vulnerable groups throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. To address the governance, recovery, reconstruction and structural development needs that have been compounded by the conflict, the United Nations Support Plan for the Transformation of the Gaza Strip 2014-2016 details the United Nations contribution to the Palestinian National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza for 2014-2017 and requests $2.1 billion. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework presents the United Nations strategic response to the Palestinian development priorities contained in the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty.

4. During the conflict, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process worked with the parties and the international community to negotiate humanitarian pauses and ceasefires. In response to the unprecedented reconstruction needs of the Gaza Strip, the Office brokered a temporary agreement between the Governments of Israel and the State of Palestine to enable the entry, use and monitoring of "dual-use" material into Gaza to allow reconstruction work and the rehabilitation of damaged facilities at scale. Throughout the year, the Office continued its efforts to support the peace process and to ensure effective coordination among the Government of the State of Palestine, the United Nations, the international community and the Government of Israel. It also continued to document the economic and social conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory and to develop policies and programmes to improve them.

II. Overview of the current situation

A. Political context

5. Since the collapse of the peace talks brokered by the United States of America in April 2014, negotiations between the parties have not resumed. Negative developments thereafter, primarily the abduction and killing of three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank and of a Palestinian teenager in East Jerusalem, in addition to the conflict, reduced the prospects of resuming meaningful talks.

6. On 30 December, the Security Council rejected a Palestinian-drafted resolution submitted by Jordan in which it would have, among other things, called for a final peace agreement to be reached within a year and an end to the Israeli occupation by the end of 2017. The resolution failed to garner the minimum 9 of 15 votes.

7. On 31 December, the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, signed instruments of accession to 18 international treaties, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and lodged a declaration accepting the Court's jurisdiction since 13 June 2014. On 2 January, 16 instruments of accession were submitted to the Secretary-General, who accepted them in deposit after having ascertained that they were in due and proper form. In response, Israel began to suspend the transfer of tax revenue that it collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority and was, at the time of writing, withholding the amounts for December, January and February.

8. Quartet envoys continued to meet regularly and to engage the parties to encourage them to resume peace negotiations. On 8 February, the principals met in Munich, Germany, and declared that they would remain actively engaged in preparing for a resumption of the peace process, including regular and direct outreach to Arab States.

9. Long-overdue Palestinian elections were not conducted during the reporting period. In Israel, the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, dissolved his coalition Government on 2 December. General elections were held on 17 March, some two years ahead of schedule.

10. The situation in the West Bank, already tense owing to a hunger strike by more than 100 prisoners and an increase in demolitions, worsened on 12 June when three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and murdered near Hebron, reportedly by Hamas affiliates. Hamas rejected the accusation but issued statements in which it glorified the perpetrators. A Palestinian teenager from East Jerusalem was abducted and killed in a retaliatory attack on 2 July; three Israelis were charged with the crime and are currently on trial. During intensive search operations in the West Bank after the kidnapping of the Israeli teenagers, including in major population centres, 6 Palestinians were killed, more than 800 injured and more than 500 reportedly arrested. A large majority of those arrested were Hamas affiliates and more than 50 Palestinians previously released as part of the so-called "Shalit deal".

11. Settlement activity continued apace, including significant announcements by the Israeli authorities in June and October that they would construct thousands of units. Following those announcements and the conflict, tensions increased in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Individual attacks by Palestinians, including

against the light rail system in Jerusalem, were met by punitive house demolitions and further access restrictions by Israel, including to Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount. Clashes there occurred on a weekly basis until 13 November, when the Secretary of State of the United States, John F. Kerry, and the King of Jordan, King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein, held separate meetings in Amman with the President of the State of Palestine and the Prime Minister of Israel and agreement was struck to reduce the tensions. Israel has since lifted access restrictions on male Palestinian worshippers.

12. The deterioration of the situation in the West Bank also included plans to transfer Bedouins, including from the strategic E1 area, to relocation sites; increases in demolitions of Palestinian structures, including residences; clashes between Palestinians and settlers; and an escalation in violent clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and the Israeli security forces resulting in casualties on both sides, including Palestinian casualties caused by live fire. A mass hunger strike by Palestinians imprisoned in Israel was suspended on 25 June when an agreement was reached with the Israeli authorities to begin negotiations on prisoner conditions, including detention without charge.

13. In Gaza, at a time when the de facto authorities were under increasing financial pressure resulting from the closure of smuggling tunnels by Egypt, the relative calm prevailing since November 2012 unravelled following the murder of the three Israeli teenagers and the ensuing arrest of hundreds of Hamas supporters throughout the West Bank. There was also an increase in rockets fired from Gaza and Israeli air strikes on Gaza beginning on 24 June, including 85 rockets fired at Israel by Hamas and other militant groups on 7 July. From 8 July to 26 August, a 50-day Israeli military operation was conducted in and around Gaza. It was the third major conflict – and the longest and most violent – between Israel and Palestinian armed groups since Hamas assumed control of Gaza in 2007. Israel struck more than 5,000 locations in Gaza and reportedly demolished 32 tunnels, including 14 with openings inside Israel. In excess of 3,500 rockets were fired by Hamas and other Palestinian militants from Gaza at Israel; another 700 were intercepted by the Iron Dome defence system. More than 2,200 Palestinians, mostly civilians and including some 500 children, were killed. On the Israeli side, 66 Israel Defense Forces personnel and five civilians, including a child and a foreign national, were killed.

14. On 26 August, following several humanitarian pauses, an open-ended ceasefire brokered by Egypt went into effect. The agreement provided for a comprehensive ceasefire, the opening of the crossings between Gaza and Israel to allow for the entry of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction material, the expansion of the fishing zone and the continuation of indirect negotiations between the parties on all other topics within a month of the acceptance of the agreement. On 23 September, Israelis and Palestinians met in Cairo to discuss strengthening the ceasefire arrangements. At the time of writing, no additional meetings had been held and the ceasefire remained fragile, with Palestinian armed groups frequently test-firing rockets.

15. At a donor conference held on 12 October in Cairo, the international community pledged some $5.4 billion for the reconstruction needs of Gaza and to support the budget of the Government of the State of Palestine until 2017. The United Nations, while maintaining that full lifting of the closures of Gaza was

required in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), brokered a temporary agreement between the Governments of Israel and the State of Palestine to enable the entry, use and monitoring of "dual-use" material, such as aggregate, bars and cement, into Gaza for reconstruction. That temporary reconstruction mechanism has to date enabled some 88,000 households to purchase construction material to repair shelters. It has also processed more than 100 construction projects, including for housing, water networks and schools, of which 56 have been approved.

16. The pace of reconstruction remained far below the expectations of the population in Gaza, however, primarily as a result of the low level of disbursement of pledges made in Cairo and the lack of progress in tackling the underlying causes of instability. In addition, only limited financial support was provided to United Nations agencies carrying out vital humanitarian operations in Gaza. At the end of January, UNRWA suspended its cash assistance programme that supported repairs and provided rental subsidies to Palestinian refugee families owing to a lack of funds. Consequently, demonstrators attacked the compound housing the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process in Gaza on 29 January, damaging the facility and assets.

17. The Palestinian divide continued, notwithstanding the "Beach Camp" intra-Palestinian unity accord signed by the Government of the State of Palestine and Hamas on 23 April and the formation of an interim technocratic Government of national consensus by the President on 2 June on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization commitments of recognition of Israel, non-violence and adherence to previous agreements. The Government was broadly accepted by the international community, including the United Nations. On 25 September, Palestinian factions reached an understanding to facilitate the implementation of the unity accord, including by allowing the Government to take up its governance and security functions in Gaza, including control over the crossings, and effectively steer reconstruction efforts. Those efforts have yet to bear fruit, however, partly owing to the limited progress made on much-needed civil service reform and the consequent delays in paying the thousands of civil servants hired by the de facto authorities since June 2007.

B. Humanitarian and socioeconomic context

Economic and fiscal developments

18. According to the Ministry of Finance, while the Government continued to implement key economic and fiscal reforms, fiscal consolidation progressed slowly during the reporting period. The fiscal strain is evident through the continued accumulation of arrears and high public debt. In 2014, both total revenue and total expenditure were 5 per cent above budget, with net lending reaching 170 per cent of the budgeted amount. This resulted in a total deficit of $1.64 billion. In 2014, the Government received just in excess of $1 billion in direct budget support, a sum lower than projected.

19. According to the International Monetary Fund, economic activity contracted in 2014, following the conflict and mounting political tensions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It estimates that the real gross domestic product fell by nearly 1 per cent, the first contraction since 2006, with gross domestic product

declining by about 15 per cent in Gaza but rising by 4.5 per cent in the West Bank, with a sharp slowdown in the third quarter.

20. The International Monetary Fund indicates that a high degree of uncertainty and challenges are likely to prevent a strong economic recovery in 2015. Notably, beginning in January, the Government of Israel stopped transferring clearance revenue collected on goods imported into the West Bank and Gaza to the Government of the State of Palestine. Such revenue represents about two thirds of net revenue and is essential to the Palestinian budget and economy. Consequently, according to the Ministry of Finance, wage payments and other public spending were cut.

21. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, unemployment remains high. At the end of 2014, 26.9 per cent of Palestinians were unemployed, an increase over the 2013 year-end rate of 23.4 per cent. The global average masks significant differences by sex, age and location. A total of 23.8 per cent of Palestinians males were unemployed, compared with 36.5 per cent of females. In addition, unemployment remains particularly high among young people, with 45.6 per cent of people between 20 and 24 years of age and 35 per cent of people between 25 and 29 years of age unemployed. Moreover, unemployment is significantly higher in the Gaza Strip (42.8 per cent) than in the West Bank (17.4 per cent).

Humanitarian developments

22. Between 1 May 2014 and 28 February 2015, 2,295 Palestinians were killed (2,245 in Gaza, including some 1,500 civilians; 50 civilians in the West Bank; overall, 569 children and 297 women) and 16,506 injured (11,233 in Gaza, including 3,436 children and 3,540 women, and 5,273 in the West Bank, including 1,011 children and 100 women) by the Israeli security forces. The vast majority of those deaths and injuries (2,219 deaths and 10,500 injuries) were a result of the conflict. During the reporting period, 85 Israelis (5 civilians as a result of the conflict and 12 civilians in the West Bank) were killed.

23. During the conflict, 11 UNRWA personnel were killed and 118 UNRWA installations, including 83 schools and 10 health centres, were damaged. On seven occasions, UNRWA schools being used as designated emergency shelters were either hit or struck by shells or other munitions in response to reports of firing from adjacent or nearby facilities. On three such occasions, persons sheltering at the schools were killed and many others injured.

24. In addition to fatalities and injuries, the conflict caused unprecedented displacement, with up to 500,000 Palestinians forced to flee their homes at the height of the conflict. Some 293,000 sought shelter in 85 UNRWA schools serving as designated emergency shelters. At the time of writing, UNRWA was continuing to provide shelter and basic services to almost 10,000 internally displaced persons living in 14 Agency-run collective centres. An estimated 100,000 homes were severely destroyed or damaged and severe damage was caused to public infrastructure, including the sole power plant in Gaza and critical water and sanitation infrastructure.

25. In the West Bank, demolitions of housing and livelihood assets continued during the reporting period, with 687 structures demolished in Area C and East

Jerusalem, displacing 1,330 persons, around 60 per cent of whom were children. At least 6,000 persons were affected by the demolitions.

26. According to the Israel Prison Service, 163 children (159 boys and 4 girls) between 14 and 17 years of age were being held in Israeli military detention for alleged security violations as at the end of January.

Movement, humanitarian access and operational space

27. In Gaza, restrictions on land and sea access imposed by the Government of Israel remained in place. The United Nations effectively engaged with the Government on humanitarian access during the conflict to allow for the unimpeded access of humanitarian supplies, but the Gaza Strip remained closed.

28. Access to and movement of Palestinians between most Palestinian urban centres in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, remained restricted during the reporting period. Those restrictions on Palestinian access to land, social services and economic opportunities in East Jerusalem and Area C hinder development efforts, resulting in deteriorating living conditions and increased vulnerability.

29. From May 2014 to February 2015, at least 276 incidents of delayed or denied access by United Nations and non-governmental organization staff members were reported at Israeli checkpoints. Around 76 of the incidents occurred as United Nations staff crossed the barrier on the Jerusalem periphery.

Barrier

30. The construction of the barrier continued in the north-west of the Bethlehem Governorate, as did rerouting works near Khirbet Jubara in Tulkarem and around Qalqiliya. The United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory established pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/17 continued its outreach and claim intake activities. More than 46,000 claims and 550,000 supporting documents have been collected. Claim intake activities in the Tubas, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqiliya, Salfit, Ramallah and Hebron Governorates have been completed, while outreach and claim intake activities in the Bethlehem Governorate are at an advanced stage.

III. United Nations response

31. Through the 2014 Strategic Response Plan, the United Nations and its partners continued to coordinate and deliver humanitarian and protection assistance, including food assistance, to 1.9 million vulnerable Palestinians, in particular in Gaza. In addition, the United Nations and its partners coordinated and delivered humanitarian assistance, including food and shelter assistance, through the Gaza Crisis Appeal. The humanitarian strategies are aligned with the National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza for 2014-2017 and United Nations development programming.

32. The United Nations implemented the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, a strategic planning framework that guides United Nations development programming for 2014-2016 and is aligned with the Palestinian National Development Plan for 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty. It places the Palestinian people at the centre of development programming with the aim of

enhancing human security, thereby laying the foundation for human development objectives in a context of occupation. To support recovery and reconstruction efforts in Gaza, the United Nations Support Plan for the Transformation of the Gaza Strip 2014-2016, which contributes to the National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza for 2014-2017, is aimed at tackling governance and structural development issues.

A. Human and social development

33. During the reporting period, including during the conflict, the United Nations continued to coordinate and deliver humanitarian assistance, including food assistance, to more than 1 million people, water and sanitation assistance to more than 1.5 million people and health and nutrition services to some 2.5 million people in the occupied Palestinian territory.

34. United Nations development programming focused on capacity development, infrastructure and the provision of direct assistance and basic services. As outlined in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the work is centred on six strategic areas: economic empowerment, livelihoods, decent work and food security; governance, rule of law, justice and human rights; education; health care; social protection; and urban development, natural resource management and infrastructure. The financial resources required are estimated at $1.2 billion, of which $657 million had been mobilized at the time of writing.

35. Below are illustrative examples of the types of assistance provided by the United Nations.

Education

36. Nine United Nations agencies continued to support the implementation of the Education for All package for the State of Palestine, which is led by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to meet capacity-building needs in inclusive and child-friendly education and early childhood development. Work included supporting the Ministry in the opening of 47 preschool classrooms (33 in the West Bank and 14 in Gaza) and for the implementation of the new strategy on early childhood development. In addition, 77 pilot schools in the West Bank and Gaza (including 12 UNRWA schools) benefited from various education interventions, including school feeding programmes and capacity development programmes focusing on inclusive and child-friendly education, early childhood development and special educational needs. Before the conflict, United Nations agencies also improved access to education through the rehabilitation of 34 schools in the West Bank and 37 schools in Gaza, benefiting 34,000 children. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), along with its national partners, supported safe and protected access for some 6,900 children to schools in 18 locations, including checkpoints, gates and schools most vulnerable to settler violence and harassment by the Israel Defense Forces.

37. UNRWA provided free primary education to more than 290,000 children enrolled in 349 elementary and preparatory schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza. In Gaza, 86.5 per cent of the 252 UNRWA schools currently operate on a double-shift or triple-shift system (an increase from 71 per cent in 2013). The increase is the result of a continuously growing population and several UNRWA

school buildings being used as shelters for 10,000 internally displaced persons. As a result of the conflict, the beginning of the new school year for some 240,000 pupils in UNRWA schools was delayed by three weeks. UNRWA conducted psychosocial and recreational activities and counselling sessions to help children in their transition back to school.

38. UNICEF provided supplies and equipment and trained 50 staff in the early detection of hearing and speech difficulties, covering 8,000 children in government schools in Gaza. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) trained 25 pupils to be young educators on sexual and reproductive health for adolescents and young people. Those trained reached an additional 680 pupils through after-school activities throughout the West Bank. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to implement the Al Fakhoura Scholarship Programme for Gazan pupils, supporting 225 additional scholarships during the reporting period to bring the total number of scholarships provided to 445.

39. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established 12 libraries (10 in the West Bank and 2 in Gaza) accessible to persons with disabilities and trained 10 newly recruited librarians.

Health

40. UNRWA continued to be a major provider of health-care services, operating 42 health-care facilities, 22 primary health-care centres, a hospital and a non-communicable-disease referral centre in Gaza and the West Bank and employing more than 2,000 staff. Annually, an average of 26,000 Palestine refugees in the West Bank received assistance to meet hospital-care costs. During the conflict, UNRWA health services were extended to all Palestinians in Gaza.

41. UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) supported the Ministry of Health in procuring polio vaccines and coordinated a national immunization campaign, which benefited 639,481 children. UNICEF also trained 250 Ministry and UNRWA staff on advanced immunization skills. WHO conducted a mass public awareness campaign on Ebola virus disease.

42. UNICEF completed the rehabilitation of neonatal units in six government hospitals in Gaza and the West Bank and enhanced the skills of 285 health-care professionals in an effort to improve neonatal health care. It also continued to support the Ministry of Health in implementing the baby-friendly hospital initiative in 11 government hospitals and reached 4,554 high-risk women and their newborns through the postnatal home visits programme.

Water and sanitation

43. In the West Bank, UNDP improved access to natural resources through the construction or rehabilitation of 229 water cisterns and the rehabilitation of water networks and springs. In addition, 52 wastewater treatment units were installed, benefiting 52 households in four rural communities. In Gaza, UNDP completed the rehabilitation and expansion of a solid waste dumping site. UNICEF continued to improve access to water by supporting the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility in the construction and installation of a short-term low-volume seawater desalination plant in Gaza. It also provided water storage tanks to households in the access-restricted areas, which benefited at least

7,112 people, and completed construction work to improve access to adequate sanitation for at least 900 people. UNICEF supported improved access to water through water delivery and water network repairs, benefiting 64,099 people in the West Bank.

44. UNICEF also continued to support the water and sanitation in schools programme, which provided improved and sustainable access to safe water and sanitation for 44,342 pupils through the rehabilitation and construction of water and sanitation facilities, while addressing the special needs of pupils with disabilities in 91 schools in the West Bank and Gaza. It installed solar distillation units in three schools (1 in the West Bank and 2 in Gaza), providing around 800 pupils with clean drinking water.

Employment

45. United Nations agencies continued to support income-generating and self-employment opportunities for vulnerable Palestinians. UNDP targeted around 3,500 families throughout the West Bank and Gaza and focused on income-generating activities in microenterprise and small enterprise development. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), through 62 women's centres, focused on job opportunities in food processing and marketing. The programme directly benefited 761 women workers, and more than 43,400 women benefited from the psychosocial counselling, legal counselling, training and other services provided at the centres. Forty centres have reached financial sustainability. The activity also benefited 348 schools and more than 134,351 schoolchildren who received healthy and affordable snacks made by women from the community-based centres. UN-Women also provided training for 70 women in the West Bank and Gaza on designing and producing high-quality marketable Palestinian handicrafts. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) supported 27 cooperatives (including 6 women's cooperatives), helping 1,285 persons to achieve improved economic conditions through training to strengthen their marketing skills and the provision of tools to improve the marketability of their products.

46. The International Labour Organization continued to implement a programme to support livelihoods and job opportunities in the fishery sector in Gaza, which facilitated the development of a recovery plan and provided management training to cooperative members. In addition, UNDP supported some 520 farmers with asset replacement and business development services.

47. UNDP supported access to trade information by launching the first Palestinian trade portal in October 2014. It provides Palestinian businesses with information on trade agreements, conditions for export to specific countries, feasibility analysis, procedures and guidelines, in addition to allowing international partners to gain access to information on Palestinian businesses and products and services.

Targeted social protection

48. In Gaza, UNRWA distributed 305,424 food parcels to 21,286 Palestine refugee households through the social safety net programme, but was forced to suspend cash assistance owing to budgetary constraints in January. It also distributed 108,159 food parcels and $1.06 million in supplementary cash assistance to 9,509 Palestine refugee households through its social safety net programme in the West Bank. The

World Food Programme (WFP) continued to support the Government's social safety net programme, through which it provided more 211,020 people in the State of Palestine, both in the West Bank and Gaza, with food and food vouchers.

Culture

49. UNESCO continued to support the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in the West Bank and Gaza, with 12 historic sites renovated for public use and another 16 historic sites under renovation.

50. UNDP supported the establishment of the first Palestinian public library in the Old City of Jerusalem, including by providing equipment and furniture and undertaking rehabilitation work.

Food security and agriculture

51. United Nations agencies, including FAO, continued to improve water availability and management to enhance agricultural production in Area C of the West Bank. A total of 1,400 people in Area C have benefited from the rehabilitation of wells and 7,250 dunums of agricultural land are now again irrigated efficiently. FAO also rehabilitated five wells, benefiting 1,400 persons, and UNDP rehabilitated another 10, benefiting 300 new farms in highly marginalized areas. UNDP constructed 36 km of agricultural access roads and 120 water cisterns to enable supplementary irrigation.

52. UNDP finalized the development of an additional 1,976 dunums of land for marginalized farmers in areas of the West Bank that are in direct proximity to Israeli settlements or in the seam zones, bringing the total reclaimed land to some 13,200 dunums. It also supported land development activities to ensure the sustainable use of land.

53. Through the agriculture sector revitalization activities of FAO, 1,002 farmers received intensive training on pest management and global good agricultural practices certification.

Human rights, women, children and young people

54. Five United Nations agencies continued a joint programme to strengthen respect for the human rights of persons with disabilities through legislation, in compliance with the Palestinian Disability Law and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to mainstream considerations for persons with disabilities in schools and employment services.

55. United Nations agencies continued to support the special needs of women, including by tackling gender based violence. UN-Women provided capacity-building activities for officers of the Palestinian Civil Police in family protection units to respond to cases of violence against women with a view to safeguarding rights and due process. It continued to support the Mehwar Centre for the Protection and Empowerment of Women and Families in the West Bank, which provided 355 legal advisory, consultation and representation services. UNRWA established referral systems in Gaza and the West Bank to tackle gender-based violence. More than 900 survivors of gender-based violence were identified and legal and psychosocial services were provided to more than 700 persons referred.

56. United Nations agencies conducted awareness-raising activities on various gender, youth and human rights issues. UNRWA reached more than 14,000 Palestine refugees in community-awareness and prevention activities relating to gender-based violence, children's and human rights, domestic violence, neglect and sexual abuse. UNESCO conducted an advocacy campaign on gender-based violence in 11 governorates of the West Bank, targeting young people from marginalized rural areas. With UNICEF support, more than 6,500 children vulnerable to violence, abuse, exploitation and in contact with the law benefited from child protection services provided by 14 child protection networks and 11 police family and juvenile protection units. In partnership with the Higher Council of Palestinian Youth and Sport and non-governmental organization partners, United Nations agencies reached 122,755 adolescents, who participated in and benefited from educational and recreation activities in safe spaces.

57. UNICEF continued to lead the inter-agency working group for the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009). The working group continued to document grave violations and informed programmatic action and advocacy. Its documentation of the treatment of children in military detention also informed the continuing dialogue with the Israeli authorities, specifically in relation to the implementation of pilot-testing of the issuance of summonses in lieu of night arrests.

Environment, housing and urban development

58. UNDP continued to implement additional phases of the construction of the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park through the provision of essential infrastructure services, including water, electricity, buildings and structures and telecommunications.

59. UNDP provided support for adequate housing to 160 low-income families in East Jerusalem, improved housing for 840 families in marginalized areas in the West Bank and access to renewable energy for 1,796 families in the West Bank.

B. United Nations system emergency assistance

60. The United Nations and humanitarian partners coordinated humanitarian assistance during the conflict, including provision of water, food assistance, shelter and non-food items to 340,000 displaced persons at the height of the conflict in United Nations and government shelters, in addition to support to internally displaced persons with host families through the distribution of humanitarian aid. Psychosocial support was provided to thousands of children and caregivers in shelters. UNRWA provided in-kind food commodities to more than 830,000 Palestine refugees and turned its facilities into designated emergency shelters. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs coordinated the humanitarian response on behalf of the international community.

61. The 2015 Strategic Response Plan is seeking $705 million, of which nearly 80 per cent is for Gaza, nearly double the amount requested for 2014.

62. In addition, the UNRWA Emergency Appeal for 2015 is requesting $414.4 million to meet the needs of some 2 million Palestine refugees in Gaza and

the West Bank. Most of the funding requested (88 per cent) is for Gaza. The Emergency Appeal for 2014 mobilized $127 million of the $300 million requested, with most of the funds mobilized allocated to Gaza.

63. In Gaza, shelter remains the primary humanitarian need, with some 100,000 persons remaining displaced as a result of the damage and destruction of housing stemming from the conflict and the slow pace of reconstruction.

64. The energy situation in the Gaza Strip remains extremely fragile. During the reporting period, the United Nations, with contributions from Turkey, put in place a safety net to replenish the on-site reserves for essential services (e.g. health and water/sanitation). Nevertheless, the current situation highlights the need to develop a structural solution to the energy problems facing Gaza.

65. In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, and at the request of United Nations entities, the United Nations Mine Action Service surveyed and cleared 105 key infrastructure sites that had been damaged or destroyed, including the Gaza power plant, to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Emergency food support

66. In Gaza, UNRWA provided half of the population (868,000 refugees) with food aid. UNRWA and WFP provided food parcels to more than 340,000 individuals per day at the peak of the conflict. They also jointly undertook an exceptional distribution of basic food rations targeting families (620,000 individuals) who typically are not eligible to receive regular food assistance from them. In total, WFP reached more than 1.4 million people in Gaza with food assistance and provided vouchers to an additional 300,000 internally displaced persons.

67. In the West Bank, UNRWA and WFP continued their joint assistance programme for marginalized Bedouins and herders, distributing food to more than 30,000 individuals. In response to a winter storm in January, WFP distributed food to some 500 people. UNRWA, through a partnership with WFP, introduced electronic food vouchers throughout the West Bank, benefiting 45,000 individuals. Through the programme, some $2.4 million was spent on food and staples at local shops.

Emergency income generation

68. In Gaza, the UNRWA job creation programme provided 23,419 jobs, while more than 5,000 direct and indirect jobs were provided through UNRWA construction projects, accounting for 9.4 per cent of the employed workforce in the Gaza Strip.

69. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided emergency cash-for-work support to some 6,000 households (35,900 individuals) in 19 Palestine refugee camps. This provided a cash injection of around $7.5 million to food-insecure households. Owing to a shortage of funds, UNRWA no longer operates the cash-for-work programme outside the camps, but instead supports non-camp refugees with electronic food vouchers.

Emergency health support

70. Through UNRWA support, 18,292 Palestine refugees in Gaza received individual psychosocial counselling, while 10,806 group counselling sessions were conducted. In addition, 37,549 public awareness sessions were held in schools, health centres and other facilities. During the conflict, health focal points in each UNRWA designated emergency shelter and collective centres serving 300,000 internally displaced persons conducted health awareness campaigns to control and prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases and undertook 129,662 medical consultations.

71. The UNRWA emergency health programme in the West Bank supported six mobile health clinics operating in 56 locations with poor access to primary health services. The clinics served some 121,000 individuals and delivered close to 130,000 patient consultations throughout the year. In addition, UNRWA supported 49 vulnerable Bedouin and herder communities in Area C with mobile community mental health services.

72. WHO facilitated the delivery of critical life-saving drugs and medical disposables in Gaza. It also provided urgently needed technical assistance, medical equipment and spare parts, especially for generators and medical equipment damaged as a result of the unstable power supply and the frequent blackouts caused by fuel shortages.

73. UNFPA provided the Ministry of Health with critical medication and supplies to sustain reproductive health services at maternities and primary health-care clinics in Gaza. It supported mobile health teams serving displaced persons with antenatal and postnatal care, benefiting 1,380 people, including 676 pregnant women in shelters. It also distributed 882 dignity kits to internally displaced women and girls in host communities.

74. UNFPA supported national partners in providing psychosocial support to 105 health-care professionals in the primary health centres in Gaza and 3,883 persons from the most affected families.

Emergency water and sanitation support

75. UNRWA supported water and sanitation and health-care providers operating inside and outside the Palestine refugee camps in Gaza with fuel and other supplies needed for critical operations and managed solid waste collection in all eight camps. In 2014, more than 10 million litres of fuel were provided by UNRWA, including 6.3 million litres of diesel distributed to health-care and water and sanitation providers. During the conflict, UNRWA provided potable and non-potable water to designated emergency shelters.

76. Through its partners, UNICEF delivered safe drinking water to 81,500 people using tankers. In addition, more than 8,000 people had access to water filling stations during the first three months after the conflict.

77. Through support from UNICEF, 411,612 people in Gaza benefited from improved access to water through water network repairs, including as a result of the provision of spare parts for generators used by the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, the establishment of water filling stations and the installation of domestic water storage tanks in the access-restricted areas. Another 175,768 people benefited

from wastewater network repairs, the rehabilitation of septic tanks and the rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities in those areas.

78. UNICEF and WFP distributed 14,000 vouchers, enabling 84,000 people to have access to basic hygiene supplies in the first few weeks after the ceasefire.

Emergency agriculture support

79. In response to the conflict, FAO distributed fodder and water tanks to 5,000 livestock herders and material to safeguard the assets of 240 herders.

80. In Area C, FAO provided 2,412 livestock herders with material and training to mitigate the risk of economic shock, distributed equipment for the safeguarding of assets to 1,800 herders and rehabilitated cisterns to the benefit of 1,056 herders. In addition, it provided training and cash transfers for land rehabilitation to 117 farmers.

Emergency education support

81. Following the conflict, United Nations agencies supported children as they returned to school. The United Nations Mine Action Service surveyed and cleared all UNRWA schools and 21 government schools of explosive remnants of war, allowing more than 250,000 children to return safely to school. UNRWA implemented a three-phase emergency education programme, focusing on providing safe spaces and ensuring the psychosocial well-being of children as part of their transition back to school. UNICEF procured and distributed education supplies, benefiting 130,000 children, and teaching aid and recreational kits for 395 schools.

82. UNICEF supported the training of 11,000 teachers and other education personnel on classroom management and psychosocial support to prepare them for the new school year. To respond to the special needs of younger children, it distributed early childhood development materials to 11,300 preschoolers.

Emergency housing support

83. The United Nations Office for Project Services established a materials monitoring unit to coordinate and ensure end-use monitoring of the construction material intended to support the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism.

84. The United Nations Mine Action Service and UNDP worked to remove rubble resulting from the conflict. The Service cleared and safely removed explosive remnants of war from 84 areas and UNDP removed more than 60,000 tons of rubble of a total of 2.2 million tons.

85. At the time of writing, UNRWA was continuing to provide shelter and basic services to almost 8,000 internally displaced persons living in 13 Agency-run collective centres. It provided transitional shelter cash assistance, such as rental subsidies, to 7,653 families (worth $7.1 million) and cash assistance to make small shelter repairs to 69,717 families (worth $79.5 million). In addition, UNDP provided $8 million in cash assistance to more than 4,000 non-refugee families displaced by the conflict, allowing them to have access to temporary shelter while their homes were being reconstructed.

86. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided cash assistance to more than 3,370 individuals after their homes were demolished by the Israeli authorities.

87. Through support from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 280 poor households, 100 of which were headed by women, moved into houses newly constructed or renovated in Gaza and West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

C. United Nations system support to Palestinian institutions

88. At the request of the Government, the United Nations, the World Bank and the European Union, together with the Government, embarked on a detailed needs assessment to provide a comprehensive assessment of the damages, losses and recovery needs in the governance, productive, infrastructure and social sectors, following the escalation of hostilities in Gaza, to inform recovery planning and prioritization of interventions.

89. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to work with the Palestinian authorities, the Independent Commission for Human Rights and civil society to ensure that the commitments set forth in the Palestinian National Development Plan for 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty were implemented in accordance with the new legal commitments stemming from the Government's accession to various human rights treaties. The Office, the Commission and several United Nations agencies embarked on an intensive programme to build the capacity of and support ministries, including through substantive training on the provisions of the treaties and on the requirements for effective monitoring and reporting as the ministries prepared their reform programme and compiled their initial reports for the Geneva-based treaty bodies.

90. In addition, UN-Women continued to support the Commission in monitoring women's access to justice in the occupied Palestinian territory. The Commission published its first report in June 2014, highlighting the challenges facing women in gaining access to justice and the need to apply the Criminal Code and other laws relating to women's rights, in addition to women's right to defence and legal representation.

91. WFP supported the Civil Defence in building capacity in the area of emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction, including the development of an information management system that integrates a disaster preparedness web portal to raise public awareness of risks, a smartphone tool for emergency needs assessments and geospatial data infrastructure. The tools were handed over to the Civil Defence to enhance and expand its ability to coordinate and respond to disasters.

92. The United Nations Office for Project Services continued to support the Palestinian Civil Police, the national security forces, the Presidential Guard and other security services through institutional capacity-building initiatives, including training programmes, equipment procurement, the development of information management systems and the provision of physical infrastructure and equipment. It also supported the Ministry of the Interior in the design of a comprehensive institutional capacity-building programme covering the full range of the Ministry's functions.

93. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, building upon their previous collaboration, continued to strengthen the institutional and functional capacity of the Palestinian Shippers' Council. It also provided the Palestinian

private and public sectors with advisory services and technical knowledge in the realm of trade facilitation.

D. Private sector development

94. UNRWA financed 13,811 loans valued at $19.4 million to Palestinian businesses and households in 2014. Women and young people received 30 per cent and 35 per cent of the loans, respectively. The self-sufficiency and sustainability of the programme were affected by the conflict, as evidenced by a net loss of $739,400 in Gaza, whereas in the West Bank the programme earned a net income of $280,821 from its microfinance operations.

E. Coordination of United Nations assistance

95. Under the auspices of the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process/United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, collaboration and coordination between the numerous donor and United Nations forums were strengthened during the reporting period. The humanitarian country team met regularly to agree on humanitarian advocacy and response measures. With the support of the Coordination Unit within the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations country team continued to coordinate its programming through the development of the United Nations Development Action Framework in alignment with the priorities of the Palestinian National Development Plan for 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty. Efforts to forge constructive partnerships between the United Nations, the Government and the broader aid community were strengthened. The United Nations continued the preparation of an Ad Hoc Liaison Committee report, strategies and guidance for development and humanitarian work in Gaza, East Jerusalem and Area C and, together with other humanitarian actors, the development of the Gaza Crisis Appeal, the 2015 Strategic Response Plan and the United Nations Support Plan for the Reconstruction of the Gaza Strip 2014-2016.

IV. Donor response to the crisis

Budgetary and fiscal support

96. In 2014, the Government struggled to meet its financial obligations, with expenditure slightly higher than expected and revenue less than projected. It accumulated considerable arrears during the year, particularly to the private sector and the pension system, and had increased its stock of debt to domestic banks to $1.7 billion by January 2015.

Donor coordination

97. The Coordination Unit within the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process has increasingly been called upon to support the United Nations system and prepares substantive contributions for various forums, such as the twice-yearly meetings of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee. The Unit also works to coordinate policy positions and address impediments to the implementation of programmes with key donors and outside actors.

98. The local aid coordination structure continued to serve as a key forum for donors and the State of Palestine. The coordination of humanitarian assistance and advocacy continued to be led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs during the reporting period.

99. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee met once during the reporting period, on 22 September 2014 in New York.

V. Unmet needs

100. Of the $5.4 billion pledged in Cairo for the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza, some 23 per cent has been disbursed.

101. Given the continued needs, the 2015 Strategic Response Plan is requesting $705 million. To date, 21 per cent has been raised. Additional support is also urgently needed for the UNRWA core budget, which faces a predicted shortfall of $81.3 million for 2015.

102. United Nations agencies are seeking $1.2 billion to support development programming in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, of which 53 per cent has been funded to date. The UNRWA Emergency Appeal for 2015 is seeking $414.4 million to cover the most pressing humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees. UNRWA estimates that $720 million is needed to allow families to repair their homes and to provide ongoing rental subsidies.

VI. Challenges

103. During the reporting period, the conflict resulted in unprecedented losses and destruction, thereby increasing humanitarian and reconstruction needs. While the temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism is functioning, reconstruction is occurring at a slower pace than needed owing to limited donor funding. The Government must be allowed to assume its full responsibilities in Gaza.

104. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, restrictions on movement and access, demolitions of Palestinian infrastructure and associated displacement of Palestinians have all increased. Furthermore, significant settlement activity is continuing, heightening tensions on the ground. Most importantly, the absence of a credible political horizon continues to negatively affect the operating environment.

VII. Conclusions

105. The operational context for the work of the United Nations during the reporting period was increasingly challenging owing to the conflict and the continued threats to the livelihoods of Palestinians, especially demolitions, while the persistent restrictions continued to pose formidable obstacles to development. The United Nations will continue to work towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009), an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the establishment of a sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with a secure Israel.